



NEWS RELEASE

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CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION OPPOSES STATE INITIATIVE *Proposition 54 Limits Valued Data Collection*

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA — The California Student Aid Commission unanimously adopted a Resolution vigorously opposing the California Race, Ethnic, Color, and National Origin Initiative, or Proposition 54, to be placed before California voters on the upcoming Special Election ballot. The Initiative limits the ability of government agencies to collect racial and ethnic data – data that is critical to independent research, planning, and analysis to ensure fair and equitable access to college for all Californians.

This rare show of opposition by the Commission to Proposition 54 supports the Commission's belief that student diversity on the college campus is defined by a variety of factors including race and ethnicity, gender, socio-economic characteristics, geographical representation and more. And that the Commission strongly believes the collection of racial and ethnic data supports diversity on California's college campuses.

Commission Executive Director Diana Fuentes-Michel joined Commission Chair C. Michael Cooney in stating, "The Governor and the Legislature must have data available to them to assess the effectiveness of state policies that are designed to ensure that all qualified students are provided equal educational opportunity at our state's colleges and universities."

On the upcoming Special Election ballot, California voters will consider a Constitutional Amendment known as Proposition 54, or the California Race, Ethnic, Color, and National Origin Initiative, that would limit the ability of governmental agencies to collect data on race and ethnicity pertaining to students, faculty, and staff at California colleges and universities.

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"It is absolutely critical that state agencies and colleges collect race and ethnic data," explained Commissioner Maria Elena Serna, Chair of the Commission's Governmental Relations Standing Committee. "This data is used in a number of essential college processes including academic research; evaluation of applications, admissions, and student enrollment; student financial aid packaging; assessment of outreach efforts to students who historically have not attended college and much more. Without this information it will be impossible to establish and follow trends, monitor progress, and focus on viable planning activities that provide necessary resources."

If Proposition 54 passes, one major fall-out would be the significant disruption of California's ongoing reporting partnership with the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics that requires collection of race and ethnicity data. In addition, passage of the Initiative would inhibit agencies' monitoring and enforcement responsibilities under California's equal opportunity and nondiscrimination statutes.

In its Resolution, the Commission states that it opposes the California Race, Ethnic, Color, and National Origin Initiative on the upcoming Special Election ballot, and that it is transmitting its opposition to the Governor, the Legislature, and to the People of the State of California.

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The California Student Aid Commission is the state's principal provider of intersegmental statewide grant aid to postsecondary students. Founded in 1955 as the California State Scholarship Commission, the Commission's primary programmatic responsibilities include operation of the Cal Grant program, which will distribute over \$670 million to California's college students during the 2003-2004 school year, and several targeted state scholarship and loan forgiveness programs. The 15-member Commission oversees the activities of its non-profit student loan services auxiliary, EDFUND. The Commission is headquartered in Rancho Cordova, California.

California Student Aid Commission and its associated graphic are the service mark of the California Student Aid Commission.